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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI (TROBERTS), EB (KCROUCH, AGALER)

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SUBJECT: WMD AWARENESS COURSE FEEDBACK

REF: STATE 24914

SUMMARY

1. The Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program sponsored a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Awareness workshop held in Muscat from February 26 to March 1. Over 33 participants from Coast Guard to Commerce attended and provided feedback that included requests for more training, equipment, emergency planning, and threat assessments. Embassy Muscat suggests a follow-up activity in conjunction with the Office of Military Cooperation and the Defense Attach Office to meet the workshop participants' more practical requirements. End summary.

WMD COURSE DRAWS BIG INTEREST

2. On February 26, Los Alamos Technical Associates launched a 4-day Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Awareness course that was sponsored by the Department of State's Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program. Approximately 33 government officials attended (raised from 25 by strong Omani demand) representing Royal Oman Police Customs, Coast Guard, and Operations, as well as the Ministries of National Economy, Transport, Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Defense and Royal Office Affairs. The Environment Ministry unfortunately did not send representatives, who could have benefited from several portions of the program.

3. Overall, the course received very positive responses from the participants. Comments ranged from, "extremely important and necessary for the control of borders" to "very useful but we need more equipment and practical applications." Moreover, while there was keen interest from participants and detailed question and answer periods, most participants saw a strong need courses involving more practical application as well as opportunities to build on information learned (Note: Ministries often send different participants to similar courses. End note.)

SUGGESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

4. Following the workshop, we distributed a survey to gauge participants' satisfaction with the material as well as to elicit suggestions on what they believe would enhance their individual skills and border security in Oman. The following topics were identified for inclusion in WMD Awareness training as well as for developing future EXBS programs:

- Detailed follow-up course to WMD Awareness
- Posters/lists of prohibited and dangerous materials
- Inclusion of more cases of nuclear, biological and chemical use as well as best practices
- Emergency Planning and Crisis Management (including First Response)
- Threat assessment (including how to monitor companies)
- Train-the-Trainer workshops and opportunities for advanced degrees in security (in the United States)
- Equipment (from surveillance to detection and decontamination; equipment was one of the most talked-about and well-received modules)
- Practical application in managing hazardous chemical or radioactive substances, and responding to accidents
- Methods used in smuggling and how to detect weapons
- Tours and visits highlighting how prohibited materials might enter the country.

5. Based upon the feedback above and discussions with the Defense Attach Office and the Office of Military Cooperation, the Embassy suggests a follow-up to the WMD Awareness Course with a hands-on practicum at Port Sultan Qaboos (Muscat) or Port Salalah. This multi-agency activity, perhaps in conjunction with Cooperation Defense Initiative, would cover detection, decontamination, equipment familiarization, container search, and smuggling. With the anticipated expansion of Port Salalah and the development of the Salalah Free Trade Zone, Port Salalah is poised to become one of the busiest ports in the world, making

practical training in WMD essential. The Sohar Industrial Port is likewise poised to become a major regional port and petro-chemical complex, further elevating the need for specialized training throughout Oman.

BALTIMORE